

RUNEQUEST[®]

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THE SMOKING RUIN & OTHER STORIES ADVENTURES IN THE WORLD OF GLORANTHA

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As always, a special thank you and credit goes to Greg Stafford, without whom none of us would be reading this or playing games in Glorantha.

May Ernalda, Mother of Earth, bless and shelter those who read these pages.



“I want to have goblins about me, for I am courageous. The courage which scareth away ghosts, createth for itself goblins—it wanteth to laugh.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

RUNEQUEST
A Chaosium Game

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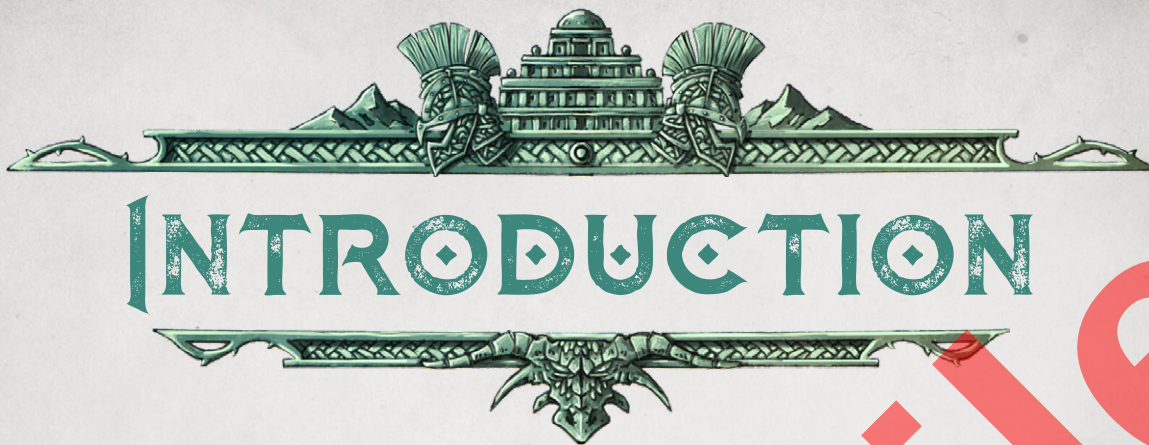
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INTRODUCTION

THE SMOKING RUIN & OTHER STORIES IS THE FIRST collection of ready-to-play adventures for RUNEQUEST: ROLEPLAYING IN GLORANTHA. Each of these adventures has been crafted to present an exquisitely Gloranthan experience: here you will find no ancient dungeons filled with monsters, marauding dragons in need of defeat, or nefarious wizards with dreams of necromantic empires. Instead, adventurers must contend with troll spirits, trollkin, Telmori wolf-brothers, dinosaurs, chimeric mercenary companies, living trees, surly river spirits, and worse!

- **The South Wilds** describes the region in which the adventures take place, providing the gamemaster with ample background, history, and geographic information to evoke them vividly in play. This untamed, mountainous region is home to the Pure Horse People as well as various species of dinosaurs, with many locations within it ripe for adventure.
- **The Wild Temple** is an ancient holy site to the Beast Men, an arrangement of standing stones where they conduct primitive rites to honor Arachne Solara. Presented here are a variety of beings likely to be encountered in the area.
- **The Smoking Ruin** is a full-length adventure suitable for several sessions of play. The story takes the adventurers from Clearwine Fort across the South Wilds to the Smoking Ruin—at the behest of the temple of Ernalda—in search of an ancient temple there. Once in the Ruin, however, the adventurers discover a deeper mystery amidst the ghost-haunted rubble and must face a terrifying foe from its dark history.

- **The Lost Valley** describes a secluded region between Sartar and the Grazelands, seemingly forgotten by both lands and happy to remain so. Known to the people who dwell there as Long Home, this section describes a region suitable as a starting point for new adventurers, or as a springboard for grander exploits. Guarded by a force known as the Wardens and home to Aldryami, Telmori, and stranger denizens, this is an exciting, if remote, locale.
- **Urvantan's Tower** is a full-length adventure set in the Lost Valley of Long Home, in which the adventurers must aid a group of Wardens against the threat of the Company of the Manticore, who seek to claim the town for the Lunar Empire. Standing nearby is the mysterious tower of the legendary sorcerer, Urvantan, protector of Long Home, now curiously absent.
- **The Grove of Green Rock** describes a sacred Aldryami grove and their attempts to plant a new Shanassee Tree, reinvigorating the elves' fading magic and reestablishing their claim to the region. The adventurers can become involved with this ritual, which takes place over the span of years, allowing the site to be revisited time and again as the ritual continues, succeeding or failing with each passing year.

Within these pages are dozens of hours of adventures, as well as multiple locales suitable for adventure and intrigue.

Though it is not required, the GLORANTHA BESTIARY is highly recommended as a reference, should the gamemaster wish additional information about many entries—creatures, cults, spells, etc.—described in this sourcebook.



THE SOUTH WILDS



THE SOUTH WILDS IS THE TERM COMMONLY GIVEN TO the rugged hill country on both sides of the Dragonspine Mountains between Beast Valley and the Grazelands. Its borders are tenuous and sometimes include the whole southwest quadrant of Dragon Pass, but more commonly it means the area bounded by Wintertop, the Smoking Ruin, and the Wild Temple.

GEOGRAPHY

The South Wilds straddle the southern Dragonspine Mountains, which run some 120 kilometers from Kero Fin to the Skyreach Mountains. These peaks rise abruptly from the surrounding hills and form a sharp, almost triangular, ridgeline. Their regular shape and steep sides make them very difficult to cross except at Dragon Pass itself. They are the backbone of the dragon Sh'harkazeel, covered in earth and vegetation. Most of the peaks rise between 1,350 and 1,600 meters high; the highest are Spirit Mountain (2,040 meters), Dinosaur Hill (1,980 meters), and Sun Elf Hill (1,750 meters). Several hill chains run parallel to the Dragonspine. These hills are rarely higher than 1,200 meters, and the valley bottoms are rarely lower than 750 meters in elevation.

FAUNA AND FLORA

The South Wilds are home to many herds of bison, elk, and deer, and especially horses. Dinosaurs are common near the Spinosaurus Flats and Dinosaur Hill.

The Pure Horse People travel with their sacred horse herds from pasture to pasture. Each winter, they bring their herds to the fertile valleys; once the snow melts, they bring their herds to the hills. The Pure Horse People protect

their herds from predators, including griffins, carnivorous dinosaurs, smilodons, wolves, and cougars.

The golden eagle is a common sight in the South Wilds and is also held sacred by the Pure Horse People.

The western hills are mostly grazing pastures of mid-length grasses with a few scattered copses of evergreens. The eastern hills are more wooded, although there are still plenty of grazelands. Pines are the predominate woods above 1,000 meters, below that, it is oaks and birches.

MYTH

North of the cosmic Spike was the land called Ernaldela, beloved of the Earth Goddesses. Where ancient True Dragons made their nest, Gata and Larnste had a daughter, Kero Fin. She grew from the depths and became her father's favorite mountain. Kero Fin was friends with the dragons and stood watch over the Dragon's Nest.

A beautiful goddess, Kero Fin had many lovers. When Umath forced his way into the world, Kero Fin rose to meet him. The product of that union was Orlanth, who would go on to become the King of the Gods. Orlanth was not her only child though. With Fralar the Carnivore, she gave birth to Yinkin, the Cat God. With Himile, the God of Cold, she gave birth to Inora, the White Princess.

Orlanth was her greatest child. From atop Kero Fin, Orlanth set off on his many adventures – his contests with Yelm, his fight with Aroka the Blue Dragon, and many more. Even when he became King of the Gods, Orlanth always returned to his birthplace and made his home atop her heights.

Vingkot the Victorious was the son of the storm god and Janerra Alone. After Vingkot proved himself in many battles, Orlanth gave him rule over the mortal world. Vingkot married the twin daughters of Tada, the ruler of Prax, called

the Summer Wife and Winter Wife. With his two wives, Vingkot had ten children, who each founded powerful tribes. Korol Kandoros was the son of King Vingkot and the Summer Wife. He founded the Koroltes Tribe and built his palace in the hills southwest of Kero Fin. The Koroltes survived the Great Darkness with the aid of King Heort, and they became one of the original Heortling tribes.

In the Grey Age, the Heortlings allied with the Only Old One and forged with him the World Council of Friends, or Unity Council, which included trolls, elves, dwarfs, and even dragonewts. Their champion was the hero Aram-Ya-Udrum (Udrumson), who won Kero Fin's love and received the Necklace of Uleria from her, tamed the giant boars, and established the Temple of the Ivory Plinth.

HISTORY

At the Dawn, this region was part of the Kingdom of the Heortlings, also known as the Kingdom of Dragon Pass. The Koroltes Tribe were famous and powerful, and sent many heroes and settlers out into the unknown world. After Aram died in 178, the Goddess appeared and proclaimed a contest for the Necklace of Uleria. Many contestants fought for the Necklace over the centuries, and the winners became kings of men.

When the Unity Council broke over the Gods Project in 363, the Heortlings joined the trolls and dragonewts in leaving the Council. In 378, beneath Kero Fin Mountain, the Broken Council defeated the trolls and the Heortlings at the Battle of Night and Day. The Broken Council ruled this land until Arkat and his army crossed the Dragon Pass in 427. Tribes and kingdoms were shattered in the Gbaji Wars, and when Gbaji was finally destroyed in 450, the area was placed under troll dominion and subject to the Troll Tax. Troll rule lasted until King Harasaran unified the humans of Dragon Pass under his leadership, although they still had to pay the Troll Tax. In 578, even that was cast off when Hardros Hardslaughter led the Tax Slaughter and established a new kingdom of Dragon Pass.

The rulers of Dragon Pass learned to talk to the dragons and in 826 became Empire of the Wyrms Friends. Aided by dragons, wyrms, and dragonewts, the Empire of the Wyrms Friends conquered Peloria, Ralios, Pent, and Fronela, and established colonies in Prax.

DRAGONKILL WAR

However, the rulers of the Empire of the Wyrms Friends became drunk and corrupt with power. In 889, they demanded to be worshiped as gods. The elves were the first to secede, but soon other regions rebelled and broke away.

In 1042 the dragonewts, heretofore neutral through ancient treaties and oaths, rose in revolt from their cities in the heart of the Empire of the Wyrms Friends and killed the leaders of the empire. This resulted in the final collapse of the decayed empire, and for a while no one ruled in Dragon Pass.

Outside of Dragon Pass, many coveted the rule of that strategic location, and when the dragonewts attempted to intervene for the sake of their nesting place, human empires worked themselves into an anti-dragon crusade. Hostilities increased, and the humans were just as eager to do each other as fight the dragonewts.

In 1120, the warring invaders mustered together as the True Golden Horde and marched on the Dragons Eye, intent upon destroying the primordial Dragons Nest.

The dragonewts sent for help from their kin in Ralios, using their last active Eye Portal. Wyrms, wyverns, and dinosaurs rushed to their defense. Most importantly, the True Dragons came from across all of Time and Space to answer the call to defend their ancestral Nest. The resulting destruction was appalling; the Dragonkill War got its name from what the dragons did, not what they suffered. Less than 1 in 20 of the humans escaped alive.

After the Dragonkill War, the dragonewts pronounced a closing spell upon Dragon Pass, and marked its borders with stone Death Runes (called the Death Line in the north and the Crossline in the south). Even without it, the superstitious awe and fear which the humans held for Dragon Pass was enough to keep even the boldest adventurer out for over a century.

THE INHUMAN OCCUPATION

We have no written documents about the 150 years which the pass was closed to humans, though there are some non-literary relics which provide interesting and tantalizing clues to some of the events.

The non-human races that survived the Dragonkill were:

- The **Dragonewts**, who had struck fear and awe into the other non-humans as well and were assuredly the dominant race.
- **Aldryami**, mostly Green Elves in the Stinking Forest, but also rapid immigration from the south by Brown Elves.
- **Trolls and trollkin**, who had been hiding in their stronghold of Dagori Inkarth in Shadow's Dance, awaiting such an opportunity to retake the ancient lands. Their invasions were the biggest trouble of the Inhuman Occupation period.
- **The Beast Men**, of different types and origins. Many had previously been held by the Empire of the Wyrms